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State Agency Compensates Businesses Up to 100% for On-the-Job Training

RALEIGH – A state agency is increasing the incentives for North Carolina businesses to provide job training to consumers of the agency's services.

The state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services – which assists people with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment – compensates employers for wages paid to agency-referred workers who the employers have agreed to train. Often, with training successfully completed, trainees are hired as regular employees.

Now federal recovery funds have made possible a hundred-percent reimbursement for the training.

"This makes a mutually beneficial arrangement an even bigger win for businesses," said division director Linda Harrington. "The hundred-percent provision is time-limited so we urge employers looking to hire to take advantage of the new rate."

Especially in a struggling economy, employers say the cost of recruiting, screening and training new employees is an obstacle to new hiring. Harrington says her agency helps businesses reduce costs by hiring applicants who've received agency services like counseling, training, and education to get them ready for work.

"We're able to match our consumer's experience and skills with a business's need," says Harrington. "That saves the employer time and money."

Besides pre-screening, Harrington says other factors give her agency's applicants an edge with prospective employers: agency professionals provide continuing, no-cost follow-up to make sure employee and job remain a good match; and tax incentives are available for hiring people with disabilities and for adapting the workplace to accommodate a specific disability. National data shows that often no accommodations are required in these situations.

According to Harrington, vocational rehabilitation services are among the most cost-effective of any offered by government. She pointed to statistics from a nationwide study: for every vocational rehabilitation dollar spent, \$5 will be returned in taxes from the consumer's subsequent employment, and \$14 to \$18 will be returned to the local economy.

Moreover, says Harrington: "We serve every county in North Carolina so, for every employer, we have a local office not very far away."

For local office and other information: <http://dvr.dhhs.state.nc.us> or 1-800-689-9090

